

# BRMC Small Group Study: John 8:12-59

## Leaders Guide

Please note that the suggestions below are not model answers but to help guide your study. Feel free to adapt the questions for your group.

### Leader's Notes:

#### Context:

We are still in the midst of the Tabernacle narrative from chapter 7. The feast of the Tabernacles is an important festival. On the first night of Tabernacles on each night of the feast except on the Sabbath, the worshipers awaited the signal of the special lighting of the festive golden lamps of Tabernacles in the court of women. The lamps were intended to remind worshipers of God's leading the people of Israel through the wilderness at night by a pillar of fire. The lighting of lamps also signalled Israel's recommitment to the God of light, and it was accompanied by festive music of the Levites and special dancing by chosen men of piety

#### Introduction:

As this passage is a longer than most, we have split it into five different sections. Each section will have an observation question and an interpretation question. Begin by reading the whole passage (John 8:12-25) and then going through each section with the questions. This will help your Small Group to understand the entire passage in digestible chunks.

- Jesus' claims that he is "the light of the world." This results in the Jews attacking his witness (v.12-20).
- The discussion then goes on to the fate of dying in sins and the relationship between the Father and the Son (v. 21-30)
- and the fact that the opponents of Jesus are slaves to sin (v. 31-38).
- Jesus then accuses the Jews of being of the devil (v. 39-47).
- It concludes with a section on the glory that the Father gives the Son This is the thread that runs through the passage (v.48-59).

#### Lesson Objectives:

- To learn and understand Jesus' true divine identity of being of the Father and is honoured by him.
- To see how Jesus exposes God's chosen people as hypocrites as they do not truly understand their legacy as Abraham's descendants.

## Read John 8:12-59

### **Observation** 1a. What is the revelation of Jesus' identity? (John 8:12-20)

- *He is the light of the world (v. 12, this is an allusion to Isaiah 42:6, 49:6, 51:4)*
- *He is witnessed to by the Father (v. 16, in John 5:31-47, Jesus also mentioned the witness of John the Baptist, His own works, Scripture, and Moses).*

### **Interpretation** 1b. What is the significance of Jesus' claim?

- *Jesus' claim that he is the light of the world is outrageous to the Jews listening. For him to suggest this in the middle of the lighting of the Tabernacles, means that Jesus is claiming to be the light that has led and will lead the people through the wilderness and through darkness.*
- *In John 6, he provided bread (just like manna in Exodus). In John 7, he provided rivers of living water (similar to water from the rock in Exodus). Here in John 8, he is the light (just like the pillar of fire in the wilderness leading the Israelites to safety).*
- *Being the light of the world is a position reserved for Yahweh. Jesus' claim suggests that he is Yahweh.*

### **Observation** 2a. What did Jesus' mention about his mission? (John 8:21-30)

- *Jesus is from above and we are from below (v. 23).*

- *He tells the crowd that they will die in their sins (v. 24).*
- *He says that they would eventually know that he is the true son of God when they lift him up (crucify him) (v.28).*
- *Jesus always does the will of the Father and the Father is always with him. He pleases the Father (v.29)*

**Interpretation 2b.** How do you explain that Jesus is from ‘above’ and that people are from ‘below’?

- *On the surface, many of us do understand this statement. Jesus is from heaven and humans are from earth.*
- *Humans are made in the image of God to serve him. If the Jews believed in the Father, they would believe in Jesus. This is the way to eternal life. However, if we do not believe in Jesus, we will be left to die in our sins. This means that while we were born ‘below’, we are given a chance to live ‘above’ in eternity. Humans have the tendency to live with earthly intentions. Instead of living for the Father’s will, we live for our own will.*
- *Jesus is saying that he isn’t just a messenger but that he is divine. He also has the presence of the Father with him as verse 29 says that the Father is with Jesus and he is not alone.*

**Observation 3a.** How is Jesus’ role in setting people free contrasted with the Jewish claims that they are free because they are sons of Abraham? (John 8:31-38)

- *He tells the Jews who believe in him “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (v. 31-32)*
- *The Jews believe that they are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone (v. 33)*
- *However, Jesus tells them that “everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin” (v. 34) and “If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (v. 36).*

**Interpretation 3b.** What truly sets us free?

- *Firstly, the Jews were in denial. From what we’ve seen in the Old Testament, the Jews have been enslaved by various peoples from the Egyptians to the Babylonians and the Assyrians. Even as they reply Jesus, they were under Roman rule. Ultimately, however, they are most blind to their slavery to sin.*
- *The passage refers to two things that can set one free. The truth and the Son. Both are one and the same. Jesus is the embodiment and representation of truth. It would require belief in him in order to receive freedom.*
- *Freedom doesn’t mean that we are free to do whatever we wish. It means that we are free from the slavery of sin. Just as Jesus did not set the Jews free from their Roman oppressors, Jesus may not set all Christians free from earthly and human oppression (e.g. Christians who suffered and are martyred under persecution in North Korea or parts of the Middle East).*
- *Jesus came to set humanity free from the ultimate oppressor which is sin.*

**Observation 4a.** Describe the two identities, that of (1) Being fathered by God and (2) Being fathered by the devil. (John 8:39-47)

- *“If God were your father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me.” (v. 42)*
- *The Jews who were mentioned to have believed in Him were of their father the devil, and their will was to do their father’s desires: To murder and lie. (v.44)*
- *Jesus says that “because I tell the truth, you do not believe me” (v. 45) and “Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.” (v. 47)*

**Interpretation 4b.** Why did Jesus imply that his listeners (the Jews) were not truly children of Abraham?

- *The Jew’s were proud of their heritage, having descended biologically from Abraham. However, the extent to which they truly knew Abraham and the teachings of the forefathers were limited. If they had understood the Scriptures (including the story of Abraham) and knew the Father, they would know who Jesus is and believe in him.*
- *Similar to previous chapters in John, Jesus accuses them of not truly knowing the Father. If they did, they would know to believe and trust in Jesus.*
- *Bloodline counts for nothing with Jesus. Even those descended from the father of nations, Abraham, did not accept Jesus. The criteria that Jesus uses is whether one would love and follow him.*

- *Instead of denying that their ancestor was Abraham, Jesus says that their father is the devil. The Jews only wanted to exercise their earthly will and desires instead of doing the Father's will.*

**Observation 5a.** Who did Jesus claim to be in relation to the Father and to Abraham? (John 8:48-59)

- *Jesus says that he does not seek his own glory but that the Father seeks it (v. 50).*
- *He claims that if anyone keeps his word, that person would not die. This provoked a response by the Jews accusing him of having a demon (v. 51-52).*
- *Jesus said that the Father glorifies him and unlike them, Jesus knows the Father (v. 54-55).*
- *Jesus said that Abraham rejoiced to see Jesus' day and before Abraham was, Jesus is the "I am" (v. 56-58).*

**Interpretation 5b.** Why would it be so difficult for the Jews to accept that Jesus is the "I am"?

- *The "I am" that Jesus says is the same "I am" that God said to Moses through the burning bush "I am who I am" (Exodus 3). Jesus is claiming to be God.*
- *Also, this "I am" statement is a theme throughout John (see John Study 6:16-21)*
- *By declaring that he existed before Abraham, Jesus incited much anger. The idea of a young man claiming to be greater than their beloved patriarch and equal to God would incite similar emotions evoked by a modern-day man declaring himself equal to God.*

### **Application**

6. What are some ways in which we have been acting as children of the devil? How can we change that?

- *List down some ways where we have rejected God as our father. E.g. We have often prioritised earthly pursuits and success over seeking God's kingdom. - We may have inadvertently been more driven by financial gain and pride.*
- *We may have valued dishonesty over speaking the truth in love.*

7. How have you experienced being set free from slavery to the oppression of sin?